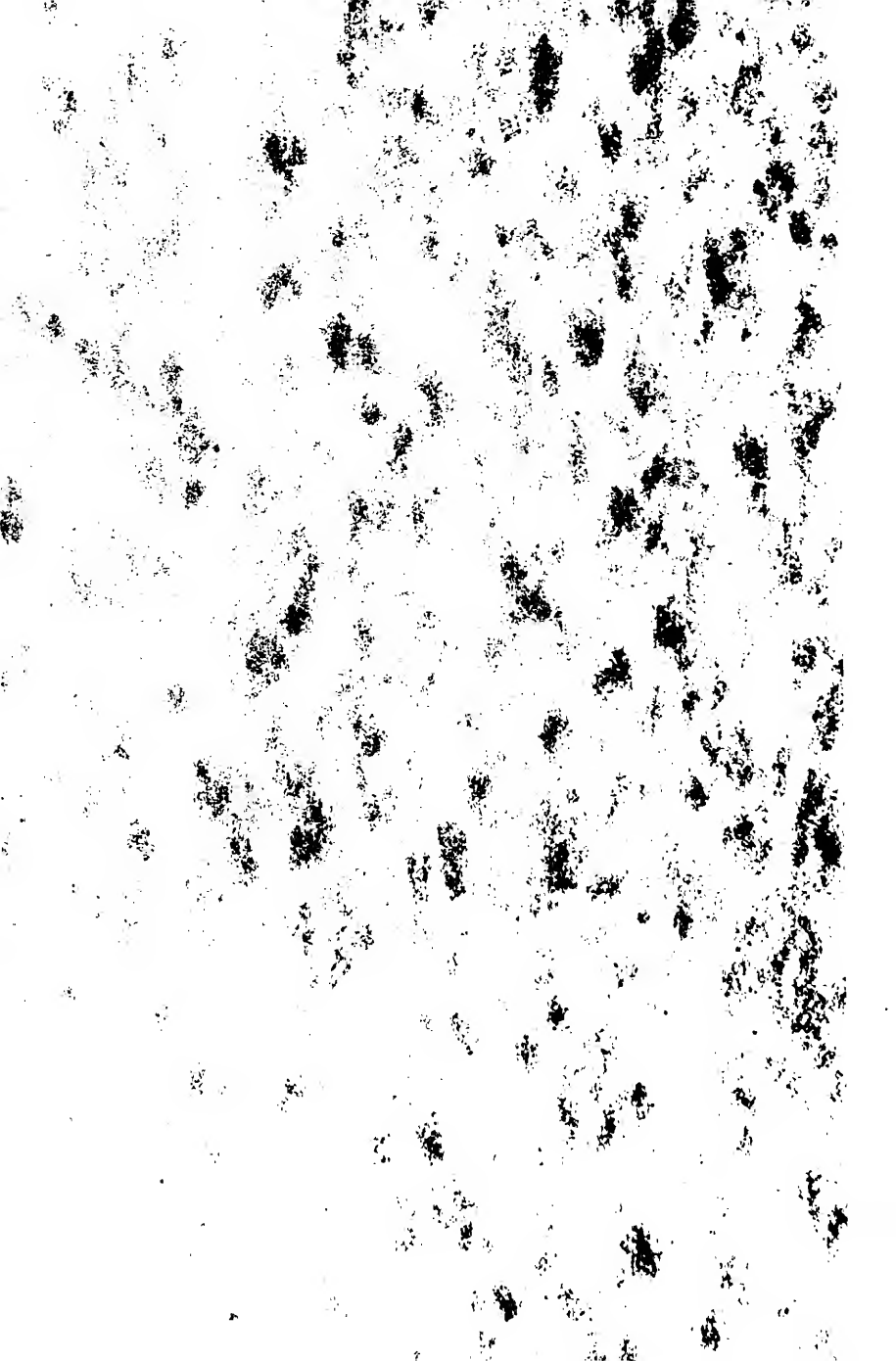


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COLOURED
STARS



EDITED BY
E. POWYS MATHERS

GIFT OF
HORACE W. CARPENTIER





COLOURED STARS

Adventurers All.

A SERIES OF YOUNG POETS
UNKNOWN
TO FAME.

(B)



Come my friends..... 'Tis not too late to seek a
newer world. It may be that the gulfs will wash
us down It may be we shall touch the happy isles
Yet our purpose holds... to sail beyond the sunset.

Ulysses



COLOURED STARS

VERSIONS OF
FIFTY ASIATIC LOVE POEMS

BY
EDWARD POWYS MATHERS



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge

TO
ROSAMOND CROWDY

TO MIMU
CROWDY

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THERE is an opportunity of knowing in brilliant English translations much of the poetry of China and Japan, of India and Persia; and Arabic poetry is accessible; but I believe this book to be the first general English anthology of Asiatic verse. It is haphazard, as such books must be until some polyglot scholar gives a whole life to the matter. Variety was the only aim possible in a space so small, and therefore I have selected love poems of different centuries and of both primitive and subtle peoples. If readers care to turn to *Anthologie de L'Amour Asiatique*, compiled by Adolphe Thalasso, the late editor of the *Revue Orientale* in Constantinople, they will find a full and clear study of Asia's love poetry and see also how much I owe to this erudite and stimulating authority. M. Thalasso's work first showed me beauty and interest in the songs of almost unknown literatures. In some instances I have translated directly and only from his book, in others I have gratefully taken his direction and traced poems back to their sources. Versions, also, of some of the Chinese poems given here will be found in the incomparable *Livre de Jade* of Mme. Judith Gautier. Reference to the texts of other poems is easily made at various libraries, except with regard to a dozen which I have personally collected. These last have not before, I think, been given a European form.

E. P. M.

London, 1918.

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SHADE OF THE ORANGE LEAVES.

THE young girl that in her chamber from dawn till eve alone
Broiders silk flowers on robes, deliciously shudders
At the unexpected sound of a far flute;
It seems to her that the voice of a young man is kissing her
ear.

And when across the oiled paper
Of the high windows the orange leaves
Come and touch and make their shadows run on her knees
It seems to her that a hand is tearing her robe of silk.

From the Chinese of Tin-Tun-Ling.

THE DALLIANCE OF THE LEOPARDS.

VERY afraid
I saw the dalliance of the leopards.
In the beauty of their coats
They sought each other and embraced.
Had I gone between them then
And pulled them asunder by their manes,
I would have run less risk
Than when I passed in my boat
And saw you standing on a dead tree
Ready to dive and kindle the river.

From the Sanskrit (5th Century).

WAR SONG.

To bodies straight as palm trees,
To hips as supple as reeds,
We prefer the straight staffs of our banners
Where suppl'y floats our oriflamme of Sun,
Our banners gilt like cimitars
That catch the sunset.

To silk hair, red as burning coals,
To silk hair, black as coals burned out,
To hair that is dawn or night on girls' heads,
We prefer the tufts floating in fight,
Tufts of gold hair or of black hair
Pulled from the tails of our black horses.

To shining white breasts on virgin bodies,
Firm as the thrice tried bronze
And round like marble cups,
Whence subtle and swooning odours come,
We prefer the clash of our sabres triple tried
And the shining of our round shields like mighty cups.

WAR SONG ☪

To the murderous arrows of black eyes
Made blacker by the bow of brows
And the kohl of love given and love taken,
The dear darkness about eyes for love's sake,
We prefer the murderous arrows
That stretch our bows in fight.

The arrows of black eyes are tipped with kisses
Not kept back, not only sped at willing hearts,
And the tips gash chance hearts often enough
And give death where no battle is waged . . .
But the arrows of our bows
Sow death only among the hardy foe.

To bodies yielding under the struggle of love
And rearing under the red fire of kisses,
We prefer our horses tricked with silver and gold,
Our horses that yield not beneath us
And bound only at the sight of the blood of battles.

Altai.

BLACK HAIR.

LAST night my kisses drowned in the softness of black hair,
And my kisses like bees went plundering the softness
of black hair.

Last night my hands were thrust in the mystery of black hair,
And my kisses like bees went plundering the sweetness of
pomegranates

And among the scents of the harvest above my queen's neck,
the harvest of black hair;

And my teeth played with the golden skin of her two ears.

Last night my kisses drowned in the softness of black hair,
And my kisses like bees went plundering the softness of black
hair.

—Your kisses went plundering the scents of my harvest, O
friend,

And the scents laid you drunk at my side. As sleep over-
came Bahram

In the bed of Sarasya, so sleep overcame you on my bed.

I know one that has sworn your hurt for stealing the roses
from my cheeks,

Has sworn your hurt even to death, the Guardian of black
hair.

—Last night my kisses drowned in the softness of black hair,
And my kisses like bees went plundering the softness of black
hair.

My hurt, darling? The sky will guard me if you wish me
guarded.

But now for my defence, dearest, roll me a cudgel of black
hair;

BLACK HAIR ❧

And give me the whiteness of your face, I am hungry for it
like a little bird.

Still, if you wish me there, loosen me among the wantonness
of black hair.

Last night my kisses drowned in the softness of black hair,
And my kisses like bees went plundering the softness of black
hair.

Sweet friend, I will part the curtain of black hair and let you
into the white garden of my breast.

But I fear you will despise me and not look back when you go
away.

I am so beautiful and so white that the lamp-light faints to see
my face,

And also God has given me for adornment my heavy black
hair.

—Last night my kisses drowned in the softness of black hair,
And my kisses like bees went plundering the softness of black
hair.

He has made you beautiful even among his most beautiful;
I am your little slave. O queen, cast me a little look.

I sent you the message of love at the dawn of day,
But my heart is stung by a snake, the snake of black hair.

Last night my kisses drowned in the softness of black hair,
And my kisses like bees went plundering the softness of black
hair.

BLACK HAIR ♀

—Fear not, dear friend, I am the Charmer,
My breath will charm the snake upon your heart;
But who will charm the snake on my honour, my sad honour?
If you love me, let us go from Pakli. My husband is horrible.

From this forth I give you command over black hair.

—Last night my kisses drowned in the softness of black hair,
And my kisses like bees went plundering the softness of black hair.

Muhammadji has power over the poets of Pakli,
He takes tax from the Amirs of great Delhi.
He reigns over an empire and governs with a sceptre of black hair.

Last night my kisses drowned in the softness of black hair,
And my kisses like bees went plundering the softness of black hair.

From the Afghan of Muhammadji (19th Century).

THE GARDEN OF BAMBOOS.

I LIVE all alone, and I am a young girl.
I write long letters and do not know anyone to send them to.

Most tender things speak in my heart
And I can only say them to the bamboos in the garden.
Waiting on my feet, lifting the mat a little behind the door,
All day I watch the shadows of the people that pass.

A street song of Annam.

EYES THAT MOVE NOT.

THE ashes are cold in the gold of the
perfume-brazier. It is shaped like a
fantastic lion.

Feverishly I fidget under the red wave
of my bed-clothes, and suddenly I throw
them from me to get up.

But I have not the courage to undertake
my hair-dressing, the comb is too heavy
for my dejection.

I leave the dust to tarnish the precious
things on my toilet-table.

Already the sun has reached the height of
the hasp that holds up the curtain.

This grief that I have hidden from all,
this grief at a departure threatening,
becomes more bitter still.

Things to say come as far as my lips,
and I press them back into my heart.

EYES THAT MOVE NOT ♪

It is indeed a new thing for me to feel
a torment; this is not an illness caused
by getting drunk, nor by the melancholy
of approaching Autumn.

.
Ah, it is finished, it is finished.
He goes away to-day.

If I sang ten thousand times the
“Stay here by me” song, yet he
would not stay.

Now my mind has gone on a journey to the
South; to his country, which is very far away.

Look, see, the mist encumbers my pavilion;
before my eyes is but the water running round
about.
It is my grief's sole witness, and may be
astonished to reflect so long and long the
stupefaction of my eyes that move not.

Ah, heavier still, hereafter, shall my regard
weigh down on you, pale mirror; for even as
I speak it is accomplished, this harm,
this sadness of eyes that move not.

From the Chinese of Ly-Y-Hane.

GAZAL.

IF the proud girl I love would cast a glance behind her,
As down the road she swings in her bright palanquin,
She would see her lover on foot, with empty hands.

Like the white buds of tuberose in a dark night
Through the lines of betel shine out her white teeth.

When she puts henna on her hands and dives in the soft river
One would think one saw fire twisting and running in the water.

From the Hindustani of Dilsoz (18th Century).

DOUBT.

WILL he be true to me?
That I do not know.
But since the dawn
I have had as much disorder in my thoughts
As in my black hair.

From the Japanese of Hori-Kawa.

SONG.

LIKE the fine and silky hair of our goats
Which climb up very high on the peaks
Of inaccessible Kara-Koroum,
So fine and silky is the hair of my girl.

Her eyes are soft as the eyes of the goats
That call their males on the mountain,
Her eyes are soft as the eyes of the goats
That hold the heavy teat to their young.

Her eyes have the colour of topaz
With which she decks her head and neck
And this topaz has the soft colour
Of the soft eyes, very soft eyes of our goats.

Her body apt for work is slight and supple,
As slight and supple as the bounds
Which our goats make, when they leap
On the curved flanks of the summit of Dapsang.

Her cheeks are ever fresh to my lips,
Fresh like the milk I draw daily
When the goats come back to the stable
From the swelling udders that sweep the ground.

Love song of Thibet.

MY DESIRE.

WHEN in your floating robe,
Woven with red silk and golden,
In your floating robe
Held round your hips
By a brodered belt,
Showing all curves
Of your reckless body,
You pass me by,
Eyeing me boldly
With provocative eyes
And sending me from your lips
Teasing smiles,
Then I feel from your eyes,
Live like two diamonds
From the mines of Sing Fos,
And from the smile of your lips
That smell so sweet of santal,
And from your breathing body
That your long robe shows,
I feel come to me
A wild and mad desire
Long, long to kiss your mouth
And your teeth painted with betel,

MY DESIRE ♀

Long, long to possess
Your loving and breathing body,
Shown and hidden
By your long floating robe,
Woven with red silk and golden.
And this desire draws me to thee
As the oaks of Mandalay
Draw the lightning.

My desire is a stallion
That must have his mare,
My desire is a jaguar
Calling his female,
My desire is an elephant
Seeking his mate.
Your floating robe and your body,
Your eyes and your smile
Draw my desire to thee
As if your hands
Had passed chains
Through the rings of my ears
And dragged me
Ever behind your feet,
As life draws breath
Desire draws me to thee.

When in the month of flowers
Snow piled on Youmadong
Falls from the mountain
In a devouring torrent,
Sweeps in his passage
Trees, houses, beasts and men,
And nothing is able
To stay his great course
That grows greater and greater
And drowns with his waters
The waters of Kin Douen;
So violent is my desire
For thy desire;
It overturns all things
In coming to thee,
It smothers the precepts
That Godama gave us,
And drowns all the laws
Of the Lord of the Elephant.

What does your husband matter?
What does your family matter?
I desire you, I long for you
With a wild and a mad love.

MY DESIRE ♡

My desire is a torrent
Falling from the mountain,
Nothing can stay it.
It breaks and upheaves.
I desire you, I long for you
With a wild and a mad love.
I want to kiss your eyes,
I want to kiss your mouth,
I want to have
Your desire and your body;
No torrent is so strong
As my desire for your body.

The desire drawing me to thee
Is natural;
Like the torrent that falls
From the heights of Youmadong,
Like the lightning which falls
On the oaks of Mandalay,
Of nature natural
Is the desire that draws me to thee.

From the Burmese of Asmapour (19th Century).

DISTICH.

A^H, would that I could hide within my songs
And, every time you sang them, kiss your lips.

From the Persian of Oumara (10th Century).

SONG.

S^{INCE} you love me and I love you
The rest matters not;
I will cut grass in the fields
And you will sell it for beasts.

Since you love me and I love you
The rest matters not;
I will sow maize in the fields
And you will sell it for people.

Kafiristan.

THE EMPEROR.

ON a throne of new gold the Son of the Sky
is sitting among his Mandarins. He shines
with jewels and is like a sun surrounded by stars.

The Mandarins speak gravely of grave things;
but the Emperor's thought has flown out by
the open window.

In her pavilion of porcelain the Empress is
sitting among her women. She is like a bright
flower among leaves.

She dreams that her beloved stays too long
at council, and wearily she moves her fan.

A breathing of perfumed air kisses the face
of the Emperor.

"My beloved moves her fan, and sends me a
perfume from her lips."

Towards the pavilion of porcelain walks the
Emperor, shining with his jewels; and leaves his
grave Mandarins to look at each other in silence.

From the Chinese of Thou-Fou.

SONG.

You would climb after nectarines
In your little green jacket and puffy white drawers;
So that you fell and I caught you.
You made as if to break away,
And then settled wriggling in my arms,
All your lightness and softness were pressed against me,
And your face looked up from my breast
Puckered with amusement.
It would be something of the sort
If our clear blue night full of white stars
Turned to a night of coloured stars—
Red and purple and green to the zenith,
And orange and light violet and lemon,
And bright rose and crimson all about the sky.

From the Chinese (19th Century).

LOVE SONG.

I.

THE mountains of Bech-Parma are great enough,
But my love is greater.

The glaciers that marble their tops are white,
But your breasts are whiter.

The antelope stricken by my bullet
Weeps a red blood from its wound

Which dyes with large red flowers
The field of the blowing jasmine flowers of snow.

Your arms are whiter than the jasmine flowers of snow:
And your kiss is redder than the blood of the antelope.

The mountains of Bech-Parma are great enough,
But my love is greater.

II.

The wind screaming in the forest when the wind of Russia
blows

Is milder than the desire that draws me to thee.

LOVE SONG ❧

Your body smells richer than the resin
That weeps in the sun from slender pines.

And your mouth has more of odours
Than mint flowers throw on the air.

When you are by my side, I feel in my body
A warmth more suave than the softest sun-rays.

And when you go away from me, my sadness
Is blacker than the lowering night great with storm.

The wind screaming in the forest when the wind of Russia
blows
Is milder than the desire that draws me to thee.

Daghestan.

FARDIYAT.

I'D wish them to put for a talisman on my tomb a pink stone;
To remind folk of the stone heart and the pink fairness of
my murderess.

From the Hindustani of Schah Selim (18th Century). .

LOVING THINGS.

I AM only a man, and yet sometimes
The green skin of unripened limes
Or the rose and gold of a naked heel
Take hold of my heart and make it feel.

And then I'm a god, that tints and blends,
Loves and laughs and comprehends;
Hunger and honour are my creed,
And the splendour of a windy speed.

And then I'm a wolf, that glares and runs
After the soft four-footed ones;
Moonlight is shattered on my track
Ere human voices call me back.

Modern Persian (author unknown).

BEING TOGETHER AT NIGHT.

BY black water and dark blue water,
Making the wide tree balance its branches
Between us and the moon,
We stood close. As close among the leaves
Small green diamonds of rain
And the far stars.

From the Chinese (19th Century).

THE PEACH FLOWER.

I HAVE plucked from the branch of the peach a flower quite
little, a flower quite rose;
And offered it to the loved girl whose lips are smaller and
more rose than the little flower.

I have taken a swallow with black wings from its nest and
offered it to the loved girl,
Whose lips are little and rose and whose brows are like the
black wings of the swallow.

Next day the little rose flower was faded
And the swallow, following the soul of the flower, had taken
flight
By the window open on to the Blue Mountain.

But on the lips of the loved girl flowers blow always small
and rose,
And the black brows over her eyes have no air of wishing to
beat their wings.

From the Chinese of Tse-Tie.

LEILA.

Oh! Leila!

In your mouth are three things
A range of Bahrain pearls,
A goblet of Shiraz wine,
The musk of Thibet;
The musk of Thibet is your breath,
The Shiraz wine the water of your mouth,
The Bahrain pearls your teeth.
Oh! Leila!

Oh! Leila!

In your eyes are three things,
Black diamonds of Hindustan,
Figured silks of Lahore,
Flames of Fusi-Yama;
The mountain flames are their brightness,
The figured silks of Lahore their dusk,
The black diamonds of Hindustan their colour.
Oh! Leila!

Oh! Leila!

In your heart are three things,
All the yellow cobras of Burma,
All the deadly fungi of Bengal,
All Nepal's poison flowers;
The poison flowers are your vows,
The deadly fungi your kisses,
The yellow cobras your deceits.
Oh! Leila!

Song of Nepal.

LOOKING AT THE MOON.

VERY far from your eyes
My loving eyes regard
The sky of stars.
Ah, that the moon might be
Changed to a mirror.

From the Japanese of a Courtesan
of Nagasaki.

SONG.

DEW on the bamboos,
Cooler than dew on the bamboos
Is putting my cheek against your breasts.

The pit of green and black snakes,
I would rather be in the pit of green and black snakes
Than be in love with you.

From the Sanskrit (5th Century).

A LOVE RAPTURE.

ROUND the Palace of Waters gently the wind
moves the flowers of the water-lilies.

On the highest terrace of Kou-Sou one sees
the King of Lou lazily lying.

And before him Sy-Che, after whom beauty was
named, dances with lovely grace of delicate
weak gestures.

Then she laughs that she is so voluptuously
weary, and languidly leans to the East on
the white jade of the royal bed.

From the Chinese of Li-Tai-Pe.

ENGLISH GIRL.

I THAT lived ever about you
Never touched you, Lilian;
You came from far away
And devils with twitching faces
Had all their will of you
For gold.
But I saw your little feet in your bedroom,
Your little heathen shoes I kept so bright.
For they regarded not your feet, Lilian,
But I regarded.
Your little heathen stockings were mine to carry
And to set out and to wash.
They regarded not your feet,
But I that lived ever about you
Never touched you, Lilian.
Their faces twitch more this frosty morning;
They have put you in a heathen box
And hidden your feet and carried you out in the frosty
morning.
They have passed with you over the foggy brook
And look like big blue men in the mist on the other side.

ENGLISH GIRL &

Now only the mist and the water remain.
They never regarded your feet,
But I regarded, Lilian.
Their faces ever twitched,
But for the seven years since I saw you
My face did not change.
They never regarded your warm feet,
But I regarded.

From the Chinese (19th Century).

GAZAL.

SEEING me come the heavenly girl fled very fast,
And ran surpassing fast, her tongue between her teeth.
I followed, and the heavenly girl at the noise of my following
Pulled back the leaf of the door and hid behind.
I followed, and for her savagery fast, fast I scolded her;
Till all ashamed and drawing back she could not answer me.
Why starts the morning cock his chant so fast, so fast?
An evil cock, an evil chant to shatter my delight . . .
And this song is only as threads of smoke to the heavenly girl,
That vanish surpassing fast upon the winds of Spring.

From the Hindustani of Inscha (18th Century).

LOVER'S JEALOUSY.

ALTHOUGH you are as beautiful as Kashmir at dawn
I am not jealous, O my wanton bird,
Of the lover that you have chosen, who takes my place
To-night upon your bed. You can ask me to your feasting
to-night.
I carry the scent of your body about with me.

Fear not. I will bring things to eat and things to drink;
Since love makes the belly hungry and the throat dry.
And I'll sing my finest ballads, for which you used to pay
Your mendicant of love with diamonds of tears, pearls of
laughter and rubies of kisses.
I carry the scent of your body about with me.

I will serve up to you all panting, all hot, and all crisp,
My heart which your spurns have made into roast lamb;
And for your thirst I will give you in a cup
In place of milk all the blood of my veins that you wish empty
of my love.
I carry the scent of your body about with me.

I'll sing to your handsome the words you love, words that
distilled in your ears
Make you all ripe to offer the cup of kisses,
Words I made for you yesterday, the beggar at your door,
Which to-day you want to hear cried by other lips.
I carry the scent of your body about with me.

I will sing him a ghazel of the learned way
To loose your hair and unravel your heavy black tresses,
Heavy with perfumes and little coins, with flowers and
pearl-encrusted combs,
Heavy above all with the odour of your body.
I carry the scent of your body about with me.

Oh, this scent floating from your neck, your breasts, your
arms;
That circles about your thighs and your little belly;
This scent that is fed for ever and for ever
From two shady flasks under your bright arms.
I carry the scent of your body about with me.

Oh, this hot scent that curdles my desire,
Odour of honey and santal, of milk and rose water,
And over all your little hot skin under great love
Breathing of amber.
I carry the scent of your body about with me.

LOVER'S JEALOUSY &

I will sing him the very slow way
Of plucking date-sweet kisses from your lips,
Of plucking from your breasts all blowing flowers, carnations
and roses,
And from between your breasts all fruits, oranges, peaches
and strawberries.

I carry the scent of your body about with me.

And to place his head on your shoulder, O little bird,
Where, big and proud, your grain of beauty lies,
Like a black carnation in a desert of snow,
Like a black star in daylight.
I carry the scent of your body about with me.

My songs will teach him the things that make you mad,
What twistings you love, my serpent,
They'll murmur him what languors break your feline limbs,
And above all how to be loved by thee.
I carry the scent of your body about with me.

I want to light in his heart the flame that burns in me,
To see him suffer to-morrow, when you leave him for me,
All the torments that I have to-day.
You can ask *Rahchan* to your feasting to-night,
Rahchan will bring things to eat and things to drink . . .
I carry the scent of your body about with me.

From the Afghan of Mirza Rahchan Kayil.

SPRING COLD.

IN the melancholy enclosure

The wind leans, and drags at the threads of fine rain.

It is a good thing the double doors are shut.

The grace of the willows, the frailness of the
flowers, these bow down before the capricious
weather that rains towards the time of "Cold Feasts."

But whatever the weather, it is always difficult
to find the balanced harmony of verse.

In the meanwhile: this much poetry is finished.

.
What sweet thing may sustain, what sweet thing
may console him who wakes from drunkenness? . . .
the drunkenness of poetry, which is other than
the drunkenness of wine? . . .

The wild swans have just passed.

Ah, I have a thousand sad things which I would
confide to these rapid riders.

SPRING COLD ❧

In these days the Spring cold can be felt
in the upper storey.

On four sides the blinds are down in front
of the windows.

I am too dissatisfied to go and lean on
the jade balustrade.

The coverlet is cold. All the perfume is burned away.

I wake from my last dream.

Why are not people with great sorrows
forbidden to dream?

The colourless dew is falling into the water.

The trees are getting green again.

Quite a lot of people will rejoice to see
the Spring come back.

The sun is coming out, the mist is drifting away.

To-day I suppose I will have to look at some more
fine weather.

From the Chinese of Ly-Y-Hane.

CLIMBING UP TO YOU.

I SANG of a glass of crystal shadows lifted to mine
With shadows of rose lips upon the rim;
I sang of love kissed asleep by other girls
That after his rest would have as sweet a waking;
I sang of my life smashed like a hawk's egg
Against the granite stairs.
Now that I can climb
Pardon me two things—
That I gave not, round the beauty of your feet,
Bright coloured songs to moan for ever more,
That now, climbing, once or twice
Being weary I shade my mouth and sing
Of my heart's blood sweetened to a red grape
For you to bite and swallow and have done.

From the Arabic of John Duncan.

GRIEF.

I F grief like fire should give out smoke
Ever it would be night on earth.

From the Persian of Schahid (10th Century).

SONG.

IF you love God, take your mirror between your hands and
look

How beautiful are your breasts with their two russet berries.
At sight of them, stricken, drunken, I cannot make a distinction

Between them and white roses beaten in white snow.
How beautiful are your breasts with their two russet berries.

No soul could be strong against your so bright eyes,
My desire hungers, for the kisses of one night did not fill it.
For love of God, take your mirror between your hands and
judge

If a man could tire in looking on your face.
My desire hungers, for the kisses of one night did not fill it;
How beautiful are your breasts with their two russet berries.

From the Turkish of Mahmoud Djellaladine Pacha
(19th Century).

LAST TIME.

ONE more time
Before I quit the world
I want to see you,
To carry with me down there
Your face of love, O my love.

From the Japanese of Idzumi-Siki-Bu
(10th Century).

MOKCHA.

(Supreme Happiness.)

LIKE the bright drop
Which, from the perfumed womanhood
Of loving night,
Night amorous ever,
Tireless in her couplings
With the body of the world,
Falls in the virgin breast
Of a rose, and straightway
Ravishes her and shows
In its tiny globe
All the work of Brahma,
All the sky and all the earth;

So the drop of the dew
Of thy love, which trembles
On the petals of my heart,
Reflects in my love
The sky of the soul,
So sought Nirvana;

My love is Mokcha
 Making me, from on earth,
 Taste the high savour
 Of immaterial joy.
 Through thy love I have felt
 That my essence is god-like
 And that I am part
 Of the world's Creator.

From the Burmese of Megdan (19th Century).

GAZAL.

WHEN you have thrown torture and desire, O cruel child,
 Into your lover's heart with lissom coqueties,
 You sit down, calm and unmoved and never noticing,
 And put desirous order into the loosened tangles of your hair.

And I watching you think of a placid pilgrim
 That has come to camp and sits taking his ease,
 With never a thought for his fellows on the road.
 And I watching you think of the unconscious earth
 Carelessly drinking the tears from wounded hearts.

From the Hindustani of Isch (18th Century).

VAI! TCHODJOUKLAREUM!

AH! my children! do you know Djemileh,
The turquoise, the carnation, the most beautiful girl
in Bagdad?
Ah! my children!

Ah! my children! her face has aspects of the moon,
And in each of her eyes there is a sun.
Ah! my children!

Ah! my children! sometimes she leaves her vest unfastened,
Forgetting—who knows?—that it hides her breasts.
Ah! my children!

Ah! my children! she has round rosy paps
Standing straight out like peaches not yet ripe.
Ah! my children!

Ah! my children! look at the curve of her back;
She might crack nuts below her waist there.
Ah! my children!

Ah! my children! what shall be said of her thighs,
What so good to dream of as her thighs?
Ah! my children!

Ah! my children! Djemileh has just passed
Appetising and gilt like a cake for Ramazan.
Ah! my children!

VAI! TCHODJOUKLAREUM! §

Ah! my children! she comes down from the mountains
With her arms full of flowers, those little flowers that never
die.

Ah! my children!

Ah! my children! the wind makes cling to her skin
Her rose robe, and makes her look quite naked.

Ah! my children!

Ah! my children! Djemileh comes to us to sell
The little flowers that never die, plucked in the mountain.

Ah! my children!

Ah! my children! when she sells her flowers
The bright eyes of the lads bathe her and devour her.

Ah! my children!

Ah! my children! eyes that pass through her robe
And do not count the money she gives back.

Ah! my children!

Ah! my children! feeling hands that tickle her
And she laughs with all her teeth, pulling back her veil.

Ah! my children!

Ah! my children! Djemileh has sold the flowers from the
mountain;

And added to her dowry for marrying the hill boy she loves.

Ah! my children!

Kurdistan.

THE MIRROR.

I HAVE saddled your raven horse with nervous limbs,
I have polished your sword, your rifle, and your lance.
Go, soldier, since you must; go, my eyes' joy:
But in your fights do not forget I love you.

As in the tiny mirror
Which you brought me from Kiachta Fair,
Promise that my face
Will be mirrored in your thought.

Before you go, make this promise—
To watch every evening at the third hour
The moon flashing in the sky
Like a great mirror of silver.

Before you go, I make this promise too—
To watch every evening at the third hour
The moon flashing in the sky
Like a great mirror of silver.

THE MIRROR &

Thus every night, I'll seem to see your eyes,
Thus every night, you'll seem to see my eyes,
As in a silver mirror
In the moon, flashing in the sky.

Who knows but that perhaps the moon,
Moved to see our eyes hunting each other every night,
May consent really to change
Into a great mirror of silver.

Then I could watch you every night
Fighting on your raven horse;
And you could tell yourself every night
That I was keeping my promise.

Street Song of Eastern Mongolia.

FARDIYAT.

THE heartless girl, that was the cause of Saquib's death, saw
his bier passing
And dared to ask of its sorrowful convoy the name of the man
they were carrying to earth.

From the *Hizdustani* of Saquib (18th Century).

AT THE EAST GATE.

At the East Gate of the City are young women,
Gracious and light as clouds in Spring time;
But it does not move me that they have the lightness of
clouds—
Under her thick veil and the whiteness of her robe, my love
gives me all joy.

At the West Gate of the City are young women,
Sparkling and beautiful like the flowers of Spring time;
But it does not move me that they have the sparkling beauty
of flowers—
Under her thick veil and the whiteness of her robe, my love
gives me all joy.

From the Chinese Shi King (1776 B.C.)

SUBMISSION.

WHEN you have bathed in the river
On the moon's third day,
You make yourself, ah, so the more to be desired
By slipping on a robe the colour of your body.
Tell me, child, are three baskets of saffron enough
To colour your breasts and your arms and your face?

No other girl knows, like you, how to entice me,
Walking alone in the shadows of the palm trees.
None has your tickling gestures, your enflaming eyes—
So young, so smooth, and so flower fresh,
You must have more men silly about you
Than there are corners in your bedroom to hide them.

In the morning when I come to see you under the verandah
Just for the pleasure of talking to you;
Or in the evening when I curry favour with the poulterer
Just for the pleasure of feeling myself near you;
Or at night when my hand seeks to clasp you
Through the hole pierced in the planking by your bed;
Your mother can say all she likes,
Reproaches, insults, swear-words. I accept all in advance.
But I conjure you do not refuse me
A quite small corner of your bedroom in which to hide.

From the Siamese.

IN THE PALACE.

WHAT rigorous calm! What almost holy silence!
· All the doors are shut, and the beds of flowers
are giving out scent; discreetly, of course. . . .

Two women that lean against each other, stand to
the balustrade of red marble on the edge of the
terrace.

One of them wishes to speak, to confide to her
friend the secret sorrow that is agonizing her heart.

She throws an anxious glance at the motionless leaves,
and because of a paroquet with iridescent wings
that perches on a branch, she sighs and is silent.

From the Chinese of Thou-Sin-Yu.

A THING REMEMBERED.

I'LL not forget the warm blue night when my bold girl,
Whose kissing lips smell sweet of honey and of rose water,

Came softly to my room, and my room glowed
As if the moon at her bright full had entered to me.

“ Press me in your arms,” she said. “ All that your love demands
Ask and obtain. My old watching woman is far away.”

I pressed her in my arms, and said: “ Your robe is a curtain.
Wherefore a curtain between me and thee, violet joy of my heart? ”

And so saying, I began to undo some parts of her robe.
She looked smiling at me and I, also smiling, unloosed and unloosed.

“ My joy, the flower in her bud pleases me not:
And fruit hanging under leaves delights me not.

“ My sword I love not in its sheath, it is no pleasure
To see the stars of night hidden behind clouds.”

From the Arabic.

THE MOST VIRTUOUS WOMAN.

PLUCK the most beautiful apricot from this tree
And place it on silk in a coffer of sandal-wood;
At the end of three days the silk
Will be stained by the juice of the fruit.

Choose the most virtuous woman from this world,
Place her image in the coffer of your heart,
Even on the same instant your heart
Will be soiled with bad thoughts.

Popular Song of Manchuria.

THE MEETING.

A SUMMER's night I met my girl on the path
That leads straight to her dwelling and straight to my
tent.

We were alone, we two, without watchers or informers,
Far from the tribe, far from jealous eyes and spying ears
and harming tongues.

I laid my face on the ground, my brow a footstool for my girl.
She said: "Open your heart with joy, we are without
watchers;
Come press your lips to my veil."

But my lips would not consent to it.
I felt that I had two honours to guard,
My girl's and mine.

And, as was my desire, we were all night together,
Near to each other, far from the tribe and spying eyes.

And it seemed that I was master
Of all the kingdoms of the world, and that the elements
Obeyed me as slaves.

From the Arabic of Ibn-el-Fared (1220 A.D.)

THE DRUNKEN ROSE.

HAS not the night been as a drunken rose
Without a witness? And the girl of bloom
Has given up all. What little cries of joy!
What wanton words repeated!
But white dawn shows the rose and green pet bird,
The mighty talker and awake all night.
Hark! The old woman comes; he will tell all.
What shall she, fluttering? Snap small rubies off
From the bright ear-rings, facets sharp as steel:
These with the seed-pulp of the passion-fruit,
His sweet prepared breakfast, mingle featly . . .
So, busy jargonier, silent for ever more.

From the Sanskrit of Amarou (1st Century).

THE TRYST.

IN thy presence my arms, my hands, my lips, all my being,
Tremble as tremble the leaves
Of the cinnamon-apples shaken by the wind.

—The leaves of the cinnamon-apple do not tremble, O my
love.

They shiver under the caress of the wind
Which drinks deep of their perfumed kisses.

Come with me to-night under the cinnamon-apples
And like their leaves you will shiver under my caress,
And like the wind I will drink deep of your perfumed kisses.

I will come. But what will you give me for my kisses?

—For your kisses I offer you my kisses.

What will you give me for my heart?

—For your heart I offer you my heart.

What will you give me for my love?

—For your love I offer you my life.

I accept your kisses and your heart and your life;

And I give in exchange myself to be all yours.

And all trembling this night I will come to offer you my kisses

Under the cinnamon-apples caressed by the wind

And in the wind that drinks deep of their perfumed kisses.

By an unknown author of Camboja.

ZULMA.

I SEEMED to see behind a half-opened door
Two roses on a rose-tree.

I was mistaken.

It was not really two roses
But the curved cheeks of Zulma.

I seemed to see behind a half-opened door
Two white lily flowers.

I was mistaken.

It was not really two white lily flowers
But the curved breasts of Zulma.

I seemed to see behind a half-opened door
Two red blossoms of the passion-flower.

I was mistaken.

It was not really two red blossoms of the passion-flower
But the curved lips of Zulma.

Women or flowers, what matter? Tell the girl
That my gardens are great and great my women's quarters.
There grow the red and the rose and the white flowers,
And the light women and the dark women, with skins of amber
and ivory,
And that I wish to pluck the rose flowers of her cheeks
And the red flowers of her lips and the white flowers of her
breasts.

Street Song of Baluchistan.

RUBAIYAT.

THEY'VE assured me that Paradise is full of girls,
They've assured me that I'll find wine and honey in Paradise.
Well then, why forbid me wine and girls down here,
Seeing that up there my reward will be girls and wine?

From the Persian of Omar Khayam (10th Century).

PICTURE.

I SEE the snowy winter sky through the old arch;
And in the middle the line of one tree.
A flight of crows comes just above the tree,
Sweeping to left and right, and tailing out behind.
I think of you.

From the Japanese (18th Century).

WHITE.

I THOUGHT that it was snowing
Flowers. But, no. It was this young lady
Coming towards me.

From the Japanese of Yori-Kito
(19th Century).

SONG.

I CAME upon you rolling in the grass,
Like a young beast you rolled over and over,
Flinging your legs wide,
Flinging your arms wide,
And rubbing against the dew.
I came upon you rolling in the grass
And crept away.

From the Sanskrit (5th Century).

THE RED LOTUS.

A FLOWER opens down under the deep water . . .
the deep water.

I take a cord and throw it towards the flower
whose roots are so far down.

Whose roots are so far down.

The mystery of the deep darkness is troubled,
the repose ceases, the ripple spreads very far.

With my cord I try to snare the lotus; as if his
heart were deep there in the water.

The sun floats on the extreme edge of the sky,
he goes down, he goes out, he falls into the night
and drowns.

He falls into the night and drowns.

.
I climb up again to the higher storey; I stop
in front of my mirror; a tragic and wasted face!

THE RED LOTUS ❷

A tragic and wasted face!

The plants are setting about to become green again,
and to put out new shoots.

How have I managed, without hope, to reach this day?

From the Chinese of Ly-Y-Hane.

ENVOY.

THE night before last night
I heard that to make songs to girls
And to make prayers to God
Were of equal value
In the eye of time;
Provided, that is,
That the prayers
Are sufficiently beautiful.

From the Burmese.

FOUR NOTES.

Black Hair (p. 13). For many of the forty years of his life, which closed in madness in 1890, Muhammadji, the greatest poet of Afghanistan, was working out sentences in prison for violent brawling and heavy drinking. In the last stanza of this poem the folly of grandeurs is easily detected; and in all his work, mingled with that drowsy music which was his greatness, is a vertigo from over the depths of insanity.

English Girl (p. 34). This poem, which could only have been thought in a Chinese brain, is yet in form very wide of modern Chinese tradition. Its author, who also wrote *Song* (p. 26) and *Being Together at Night* (p. 29), is an American born Chinese, a valet by profession, and by instinct an artist both in words and colours.

Lover's Jealousy (p. 36). Mirza (Prince) Rahchan Kayil was the pen-name of Hussein Izzat Rafi, a popular contemporary of Muhammadji. Being a fine linguist and tireless traveller, he explored the wildest parts of Asia and the most ordinary capitals of Europe, searching out inspiration for a mystical work which should reconcile all religions. At the age of 48 he was hanged for supposed complicity in a plot against the Shah of Persia.

Climbing Up to You (p. 41). John Duncan died in his middle age this year, and left only the short-lived memory of a brilliant talker and a few strange poems in the language of his adoption. How far he had identified his being with the Arabs, among whom he lived and had married, may be gathered from his serious use of the expression "A tourist, pure and simple," when speaking of the late Sir Richard Burton. This poem is the only one of his which seemed to be generally comprehensible without those verbal annotations which it was his custom sometimes to supply when reading.

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